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SPIRIN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality International (SPIRIN) is a web community in which researchers, lecturers, students and professionals in the field of spirituality exchange information and engage in discussion.¹ The center of this academic forum, multi-disciplinary organised, is the SPIRIN Encyclopedia, a new reference work in the field of spirituality. It can be seen as the workplace on behalf of the SPIRIN web community. In this article we analyze the encyclopedic quest in the area of spirituality against the background of the phenomenon of encyclopedia in general, thus providing a theoretical framework for the SPIRIN Encyclopedia.

Looking at an encyclopedia in a book-case and leafing through a volume, one may have an impression of homogeneity: the same binding, the same format, the same lay out. Looking inside and comparing different encyclopedias one may notice a plurifomity of styles and genres regarding content, scope, arrangement, aim and pragmatics. By exploring this multifaceted and widespread phenomenon,² we provide the description of encyclopedic enterprises in the field of spirituality with an appropriate background.

Reflecting on the different styles and genres we notice an interplay of two aspects: the material aspect and the formal aspect. The material aspect refers to the content collected in encyclopedias. This content reflects the different levels

¹ J. Huls & K. Waaijman, 'Spirituality International (SPIRIN)', in: *Studies in Spirituality* 14 (2004), 355-370.

² For an overview see A. Arnar, *Encyclopedism from Pliny to Borges in memory of Robert Rosenthal*, Chicago 1990; P. Binkley (Ed.), *Pre-modern encyclopaedic texts*, Leiden-New York 1997; R. Collison, *Encyclopaedias: Their history throughout the ages*, New York 1964; U. Dierse, *Enzyklopädie: Zur Geschichte eines philosophischen und wissenschaftstheoretischen Begriffs*, Bonn 1977; J. Green, *Chasing the sun: Dictionary-makers and the dictionaries they made*, London 1996; T. McArthur, *Words of reference: Lexicography, learning and language from the clay tablet to the computer*, Cambridge 1986; A. Read, 'Encyclopaedias and dictionaries', in: *The new encyclopaedia Britannica*. Vol. 18, London-Chicago, 1974 (15th ed.), 365-394; J. Dubois & C. Dubois, *Introduction à la lexicographie: Les dictionnaires*, Paris 1971; *Encyclopédies et civilisations*, Neuchâtel 1966 (Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale IX-3); A. Rey, *Encyclopédies et dictionnaires*, Paris 1982; A. Brewer, *Dictionaries, encyclopedias and other word-related books*, Detroit 1979; W. Schmidt-Biggeman, *Topica universalis*, Hamburg 1983.

on the covered knowledges such as words, things and images, texts, histories and processes, disciplines, professions and theories. These dimensions are not isolated regions, but interrelated circles of knowledge. The formal aspect refers to the way these circles of knowledge are arranged. Also these arrangements reflect different levels of organization such as a systematic or an alphabetic order, emphasizing the past or the present, aiming at scholars or lay people. These strategies of presentation are interrelated circles of learning.

Knowledge and learning are two sides of one phenomenon, as expressed in the word 'encyclopedia' itself. The word, as technical term appearing ca. 550 BC, presenting the 'circle of general knowledge and learning', is derived from the Greek *egkuklios paideia*: a cycle of sciences and practices for the education of free-born Greeks. Here we see the two sides of the phenomenon: an ordered collection of knowledge arranged in such a way that people could enter this world in an ordered proces of learning.

1. CIRCLE OF KNOWLEDGE

On the title page of his famous *Cyclopaedia* (1728) Ephraim Chambers demonstrates the complex structure of the content of an encyclopedia:

containing
the definitions of the terms
and accounts of
the things signify'd thereby,
in the several arts
both liberal and mechanical
and the several sciences
human and divine
the figures, kinds, properties, productions, preparations, and uses
of things natural and artificial
the rise, progress and state of things ecclesiastical
civil, military, and commercial
with the several systems, secrets, opinions, etc. among philosophers, divines,
mathematicians, physicians, antiquaries, critiques etc.

In Chambers' articulation of the content we can distinguish three interrelated levels: (1) The level of terms (and their definitions), things (signified by them) and images (figures); (2) The more complicated level of the socio-cultural reality (ecclesiastic, civil, military, commercial) in its growth (rise, progress, state) articulated from different viewpoints; (3) The level of practices (*artes liberales*, secrets, techniques) and sciences (theology and secular disciplines) and their theoretical backgrounds (systems, opinions etc.).³ On the front page of *The Complete*

Dictionary of Arts and Sciences (1764-1766) Croker characterized the content as 'the whole circle of human learning', alluding to the etymology of 'encyclopaedia' as an initiation in the circle of human knowledge, the circle symbolizing not only the whole but also the circularity of different levels of knowledge in itself and in their interrelatedness.

1.1 Words, things and images

The different encyclopedic traditions lay different emphasis within the triad of words, things and images. The Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions for example stress the importance of words as entrances in the real and imaginative world. As so-called 'book religion' they consider their sacred texts – the Tora, the Bible and the Koran – as the holy centre of their language and as the blueprint of reality. In the Chinese traditions images (characters) are in the centre, unifying language and reality. From the Renaissance on modern encyclopedias emphasize the 'things', as signified by 'terms' and visualized by 'figures'.

The triad of words, things and images can be understood as representing knowledge on an elementary level. Therefore, a clear separation between dictionaries, lexica, etymologiae or vocabulaires, related to linguistic data, and encyclopedias, related to accounts, illustrations and things, is artificial.⁴

1.1.1 Words

Human praxis uses words, particularly basic words, by means of which it points out, evokes and understands lived experience. Therefore, from old times on, lists of (basic) words have been constructed, important for the articulation and interpretation of lived experience.

In Alexandria in the 3rd and 2nd century BC, encyclopedic activities were focussed on vocabularies, based on rare words and names in Greek poetry. In the 'book religions' encyclopedias are basically connected with sacred scriptures. In Jewish mysticism the emphasis on language is so strong, that the alphabet is considered to be the principle of both Tora and creation.⁵ Christian encyclopedic projects are based on the Johanne principle: 'In the beginning was the Word'

³ For an extensive presentation of Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* see R. Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions: Scientific dictionaries and Enlightenment culture*, Cambridge 2001.

⁴ See Rey, *Encyclopédies et dictionnaires*, 17-24. It was only by the close of the 17th century that the modern distinction between encyclopedias and language dictionaries was beginning to crystallize.

⁵ G. Scholem, 'Der Name Gottes und die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala', in: *Judaica*. Vol. 3, Frankfurt a.M. 1981, 7-70. See also D. Patterson, *Hebrew language and Jewish thought*, London-New York 2005.

(Jn 1:1). The Bible unfolds language and reality. In Islamic traditions encyclopedias were built upon the words of the Koran.

Modern society, with its differentiated areas of technics and sciences, produced a lot of so-called 'hard-words', technical terms used in new sciences, producing a new kind of 'laity', a modern variance on the old dichotomy cleric-lay. These 'hard-words', requiring explanation (definition), were collected in so-called 'hard-word dictionaries'. They strongly influenced the phenomenon of dictionaries of arts and sciences.

Also the field of spirituality has its 'hard words', requiring explanation and definition. Therefore thesauri of spiritual terms are of all times and permanently changing, particularly in modern times. When we compare, for instance, the vocabulary of the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (1932-1995)⁶ with the *Dictionnaire de la Vie Spirituelle* (1983),⁷ a French adaptation of the originally Italian *Nuovo dizionario di spiritualità* (1979), we observe a shift in perspective the spiritual vocabulary has undergone in the last decades of the twentieth century. Half of the 105 themes of the second dictionary are new compared with the first one.⁸ The *Dictionnaire de la Vie Spirituelle* is aware of this language shift. In the nine points program for this dictionary the editors explicitly mention the reason of this change: 'The encounter with the vital context of our time confronts us necessarily with the problem of language. [...] It is difficult to articulate exactly the anthropological reality and the symbolic whole of the contemporary culture'.⁹ It is a challenge for a modern encyclopedia of spirituality to cover not only the lexicon of the past, but also the most important words of contemporary spirituality, enriched with the vocabularies of other non western spiritualities.

Methodologically interesting are the dictionaries explaining words in particular fields of spirituality, for instance the *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* in the field of biblical spirituality.¹⁰ Although the title points at 'theology', the content of this reference work is also 'spirituality', for the dictionary is not only focussed on places where 'God' is mentioned, but above all on passages where 'the reciprocal relationship between God and his people, between

⁶ M. Viller, F. Cavallera, & J. de Guibert (Eds.), *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire*, Paris 1932-1995 (17 vols.).

⁷ S. de Fiores, & T. Goffi (Eds.), *Dictionnaire de la vie spirituelle*, Paris 1983.

⁸ For an analysis, see K. Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, foundations, methods*, Leuven-Paris-Dudley (MA) 2002, 830-843.

⁹ *Dictionnaire de la vie spirituelle*, viii.

¹⁰ E. Jenni, & C. Westermann (Eds.), *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, München-Zürich 1979 (2nd ed.). See also G. Botterweck & H. Ringgren (Eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, Stuttgart-Berlin etc. 1973-2000.

God and the human being is expressed'.¹¹ The main words are analyzed following a tried and tested method: (1) etymology and derivatives; (2) statistics; (3) semantics, including basic meaning, developments of meaning, metaphor, grammar and syntax, semitic parallels; (4) divine-human reciprocity; (5) reception.¹² This kinds of specific dictionaries provide important methodological insights in the dimension of 'words'.

Defining the dimension of 'words' in the SPIRIN Encyclopedia, we can distinguish three areas.

1. Spiritualities unfold, in a dialectic relationship with the general cultural language, their vocabulary: semantic fields, to be studied by means of:
 - etymology and derivates; statistics
 - semantic analysis, including basic meaning, development of meaning, etc.
 - word geography, reception, etc.
2. Within the vocabulary some words are more central, articulating central values and attitudes, and other more peripheral. The central ones are focal points:
 - names for God
 - mantra, dhikr, etc.
3. The basic words of a spirituality deliver the root metaphors and basic categories for the study of spirituality:
 - spirituality, piety, devotion, interiority, etc.
 - kabbala, tao, lo'ob and so on

1.1.2 Things

Particularly in the western tradition encyclopedic projects developed a specific attention for things. In the Middle Ages already Barthelomaeus Angelicus conceived his *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (1230-1240) as a systematic unfolding of reality. But his encyclopedia was completely rooted in biblical articulations and frameworks.

The systematic unfolding of reality breaks in modern times with its biblical linguistic roots. Bacon ordered the realm of things on the basis of the human faculties of Memory, Imagination and Reason, controlling respectively History, Poetry and Philosophy.

Modern encyclopedias focussed more and more on things, professing to be more than definitions of words by also being representations of things. As John Harris says on the title page of his *Lexicon Technicum* (1704), they all aimed to explain 'not only the terms of arts, but the arts themselves'.

¹¹ *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, xiii.

¹² *Ibid.*, xv-xx.

This attention for 'things' is also present in encyclopedias dealing with the realm of spirituality, in the Middle Ages mostly seen as a central element in the whole of reality. For their systematic arrangement of spiritual 'things' encyclopedias of the 13th century used the primordial and bodily conditioned space and motion scheme of the ascent of the soul to the union with God, the highest level of human knowledge. Based on the traditional representation of the ascent (*ascensus*), the virtual space and motion configurations provided the readers the possibility to reflect on the transitions they made in their process of spiritual transformation.¹³ Paradigmatic in this respect is the encyclopedia *Liber de Natura Rerum*, written by Thomas of Cantimpré. In book II he arranged all spiritual 'things' within the framework of an ever higher flight of the soul towards God, initiating the reader into the highest level of contemplative knowledge, providing a blissful overview over all reality.¹⁴

Modern encyclopedias in the field of spirituality do no longer use this space and motion model of the ascent for their arrangement of spiritual 'things'. But also modern representations of spirituality need their 'models' for structuring their materials. An illustrative paradigm is the new lexicon *Bedeveartplaatsen in Nederland*.¹⁵ This 'encyclopedic project',¹⁶ containing a description of circa 650 places of pilgrimage in the Netherlands, alphabetically ordered, is focussed on the places, experienced as holy, embedded in specific rituals, and centered around a cultus object. People visiting these places make a transition from their daily environment into the sacred place, motivated by their spirituality.¹⁷ Each entry contains a short characteristic of the holy place, including topographic data (architecture, environment, cultus object), the ritual embedment, a short description of the person or thing in the center of the devotion, and the devotional behaviour (forms, actants, numbers, material culture, products etc).¹⁸ Thus, spiritual 'things' are arranged within the 'model' of a sacred place, the principle of organisation of people, rituals, architecture, devotions, objects, etc.

This reference work can be seen as a paradigm orienting our attention on the material concreteness of spirituality, as Philip Sheldrake announces in the introduction of *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2005): 'The new

¹³ U. Kundert, 'Gefühl und Wissen im virtuellen Raum: Dynamische Konfigurationen in Minnesang und Enzyklopädik des 13. Jahrhunderts', in: E. Vaura (Hg.), *Virtuelle Räume, Raumwahrnehmung und Raumvorstellung im Mittelalter*, Berlin 2005, 109-134.

¹⁴ Ibid., 119-122.

¹⁵ P. Margry & C. Caspers (Eds.), *Bedeveartplaatsen in Nederland*, Amsterdam-Hilversum 1997-2004 (4 vols.).

¹⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹⁷ Ibid., 15-16.

¹⁸ Ibid., 44-48.

dictionary includes ground-breaking entries on aspects of the material culture such as clothes, food and architecture'.¹⁹

In the SPIRIN Encyclopedia this dimension will be present in descriptions and analyses of the ways by which spiritualities organise their world, in which things get their place, supported by infrastructural arrangements.

1. Spiritualities create their world order, which in its basic arrangements self expresses the drives of these spiritualities. From this perspective we discover the importance of 'things' like:
 - dual or wholistic cosmology
 - places and times
 - the origin of the world
 - body, food, fasting, abstinence, clothes, architecture, etc.
2. Concrete things get their place and meaning within the basic architecture of a 'world':
 - material culture
 - materialisations of the divine
 - devotional objects, etc.
3. The organization of a 'world', driven by spirituality, is always supported by infrastructural arrangements:
 - economy
 - interdependencies
 - oppression
 - exclusion

1.1.3 Images

The oldest Chinese encyclopedias, from the seventh century BC on, are arranged around characters (*tsu shu*), graphic forms having at the same time phonetic and referential functions, mediating between words and things, between language and reality. In these encyclopedias thousands of characters are ordered around some hundreds of basic forms, the so called 'keys'.

In the older western reference works pictures were rare. Their function was purely an illustration of the text. In the Enlightenment two reasons urged encyclopedists to develop images as an essential element of their project. First, modern sciences tried to describe and to understand the dynamic processes of movement, causality, relation, acceleration etc. These invisible realities can not adequately be represented in words. Therefore encyclopedists developed images

¹⁹ P. Sheldrake (Ed.), *The new SCM dictionary of Christian spirituality*, London 2005, viii.

to visualize the invisible dynamic processes.²⁰ Second, modern encyclopedists tried to put the hidden knowledge of crafts and trades – the so called ‘secrets’ – in the full light of the public communication. Words were not able to mediate what really happened in manual processes such as carpentry, tanning, weaning, mining and so on. In this respect the work of Diderot in his *Encyclopédie* is impressive. His beautiful engravings tried to record exactly the interior of what really happened in arts, crafts and mechanical trades.²¹

Although in the field of spirituality practices and processes belong to the core business and although imagery, art and aesthetics play an essential role in processes of spiritual transformation, encyclopedias of spirituality and mysticism did not use ‘images’ to explain the ‘secrets’ of spiritual life. It was even worse. Besides some entries on ‘art’ in general or on ‘iconography’ the dimension of aesthetics was absent. It is therefore a step forward, when Philip Sheldrake in his above mentioned introduction promises: ‘Several entries describe the ways in which spirituality is expressed through the arts, literature and film – both in the past and in the contemporary culture’.²²

But we need more. We need representations of arts and analysis of their spiritual meaning. A first step in that direction, as far as I know, is the reference work *Mysticism: Its History and Challenge* of Bruno Borchert.²³ In part I the author explores the phenomenon of mysticism from the perspective of the mystical experience, the mystic him/herself, the mystical language and mystical phenomena as extasis, visions etc. Part II offers an overview of the history, covering the oldest forms, the East, Iran and Israel, the Hellenistic world and Europe. Part III treats the contemporary paths, a turning point in the rationalized and secularized society. Part IV covers overviews mapping mystical influences, timelines, a bibliography, lists of mystics, mystical writings and currents. The most characterizing of the book however is the fact, that all the parts are visualised. These visualisations are not simply illustrations beside the text. They ‘imagine’ the essence of the phenomenon, the major themes in history, the breaking points in the globalizing world and the geographical, historical and biographical overviews.

²⁰ For the static representations of dynamic processes see R. Mazzonini, *Non-verbal communication in science prior to 1900*, Florence 1993; W. Lefèvre, J. Renn & V. Schöpfung (Ed.), *The power of images in early modern science*, Basel 2003.

²¹ See Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 152-155.

²² *The new CSM dictionary*, viii.

²³ B. Borchert, *Mysticism: Its history and challenge*, York Beach 1994. Originally published as *Mystiek: Geschiedenis en uitdaging* (Haarlem 1989). Also translated in German (1994), French (1998) and Korean (1999).

The SPIRIN Encyclopedia will present the dimension of art and aesthetics, within which artists and users create their symbolic order, mediating between the divine and human reality.

1. Spiritualities are permeated by a language of creativity, expressing itself in an imagery of art, aesthetics and beauty, in different fields of imagination:
 - music
 - dance
 - theatre
 - visual arts
 - architecture
 - literature
 - audio-visual media, etc.
2. Within this language of aesthetics spiritualities create their symbolic order, encompassing:
 - representations of the divine world in images of God, holy music and dance, architecture, etc.
 - expressions of the human world, giving voice to desires, hopes, memories, feelings, and understandings, etc.
 - representations of the divine-human intimacy and unity
3. Particularly important are symbols by which the divine-human relationship is mediated; sensory motorial entities filled by divine values and presence, and human desires:
 - rituals
 - sacraments
 - icons
 - images of saints, etc.

1.2 Texts, histories, and processes

Words, things and images can be seen as the elementary dimensions of the encyclopedia. They are the building stones of the house. Texts, histories and processes are the more complex realities. They construct the house.

As there is a complementary relationship between words and things, two sides of one reality, there is more or less the same reciprocity between texts and histories. Texts are written documents referring to histories unfolding their sequence of facts and acts.

This sequence can be described as something exterior. Such descriptions are, from a scholarly and critical perspective, indispensable. Texts can be used as a data bank for such descriptions. But there is more. Facts and acts have also their inner history, their inner movements. From this perspective texts are stories, opening for the interested scholar the inner horizon of events. This is particularly important in case of spiritual texts. They do not only inform the critical reader about

the external and contextual horizons of lives and events, but they offer also the key to enter the interior of processual dynamics of spirituality, its inner horizon.

1.2.1 Texts

One of the elements in almost all encyclopedic projects has been the transfer of old texts, in the form of anthologies, *copiae verborum*, thesauri, compilations, text collections and bibliographies. The *Antiquitates* of Marcus Terentius Varro (100 BC) can be seen as a national monument conserving the richness of the classics in 21 volumes. The *Naturalis Historia* of Plinius Maior (100 BC) is a compendium of 2000 classical writings.

The same can be said of the Asian encyclopedias, particularly the voluminous Chinese collections. They were actually more in the nature of anthologies than reference works, being collections of old texts, made accessible by different systems of retrieval.

Also the Renaissance, aiming at the assembling of a universal bibliography, tried to reproduce the classical genre of the common place (*locus communis*) referring to a general argument capable to produce illustrations. Repertoria with commonplaces provided rethors with a body of materials which could easily be retained and repeated. In his *De Copia* Erasmus offered the advice on how to collect words and passages under various *topoi* or *loci* as means of extracts from books that later could be brought together and embellished in either writing or conversation.

Many encyclopedias before the Enlightenment were in this sense 'intertextual': they were collections of text materials, referring to other, more encompassing corpora, together establishing a form of collective memory,²⁴ meant to make the reality readable.²⁵

Probably one of the oldest threads in the tradition of spiritual knowledge is the transfer of words, stories, aphorisms, rules and advices from generation to generation. The Bible contains its collection of proverbs, handing over old tribe spirituality. In Jewish spirituality the collection of 'sayings' of the fathers, named *Abot*, represents Talmudic spirituality. In Christian spirituality we know the collections sayings of the desert fathers, named *Apophthegmata patrum*. These classic collections of words, stories and hints, are part of an unbroken tradition of anthologies, thesauri, compilations and textbooks.

²⁴ For this dimension of the encyclopedic project see R. Bolgar, *The classical heritage and its beneficiaries*, Cambridge 1954; J. Lechner, *Renaissance concepts of the commonplaces*, Westport 1962; F. Yates, *The art of memory*, London 1966; Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 101-120.

²⁵ Cf. H. Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*, Frankfurt a.M. 1989.

But these collections did not only provide an amount of literature, at the same time they offered a hermeneutic. The famous *Didaskalion* of Hugo of St. Victor, for instance, set up as an encyclopedic initiation in the epistemology of sciences, was at the same time a hermeneutic system (*de studio legendi*), dealing with such questions as: what to read? In what sequence? How? And so on.²⁶

Also in our days anthologies try to initiate modern readers into the world of spiritual texts. To mention only two examples. The first one is *Light from Light*.²⁷ This anthology presents twenty-five chapters, each containing a selection from one of the most significant Christian mystics. Each chapter begins with a short introduction to the life and writings of that mystic. A selected bibliography concludes each chapter. The objective of the editors is: that the reader may enter into the spirit of a mystic's thought and acquires an adequate idea of the Christian mystical tradition. The second example is *Christian Mysticism, An Anthology*.²⁸ This anthology presents fifty five mystics and/or mystical theologians from Origen to Karl Rahner. Criteria for selection are: the anthology has to contain great mystics (Ruusbroec, John of the Cross etc.), must include some neglected mystics (Angela of Foligno, Ramon Lull etc.), and present a broad cross-section of mystical themes (dark night, stigmata etc.).

Both anthologies express their introductory character. They do not have the pretension to offer a substitute for reading the works from which the selection were taken. At the contrary they hope that the anthology paves the path for the reader to turn to these works.

In the SPIRIN Encyclopedia the dimension of texts encompasses the field of spiritual writings and reading procedures, providing a blueprint for a spiritual hermeneutic.

1. In spiritualities different genres of texts are offered, as basic writings, texts for accompaniment, reflective writings, etc.:
 - sacred scriptures
 - ritual texts
 - rules
 - mystical texts
 - spiritual writings
 - treatises

²⁶ For a socio-cultural analysis of this work see I. Illich, *Du lisible au visible: La naissance du texte. Un commentaire du Didascalion de Hugues de Saint-Victor*, Paris 1991.

²⁷ L. Dupré & J. Wiseman (Eds.), *Light from light: An anthology of Christian mysticism*, New York-Mahwah 1988.

²⁸ H.D. Egan (Ed.), *Christian mysticism, an anthology*, Collegeville 1991.

2. Spiritualities provide their practitioners not only texts, but also reading procedures:
 - intrabiblical procedures
 - lectio divina
 - talmudic hermeneutical rules
 - pardes-formula
 - modern strategies: bibliodrama, etc.
3. Reflecting on spiritual writings and reading procedures a blueprint of hermeneutical questions can be discovered, including perspectives opened by neurosciences, exploring the dynamic development in reading processes:²⁹
 - pre-understanding
 - performance
 - referential functions
 - orative dynamics
 - mystical dimensions
 - transformational impact

1.2.2 Histories

The great innovating encyclopedias of the Enlightenment such as *Cyclopaedia* of Chambers and the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot, did not include history or biography. Older historical surveys had a chronological display of events or were systematically organized. These materials were not integrated in the new encyclopedias. This was not an accident, it was policy: 'Dictionaries of arts and sciences did not include history and biography because they were seeking to record knowledge, not lives'.³⁰ Historical and biographical subjects were treated in a distinct genre: the historical dictionaries.

The first dictionary setting a pattern for the historical dictionaries, including history, geography, genealogy and lives of famous people, was Louis Moréri's *Grand Dictionnaire Historique, ou mélange curieux de l'histoire sacrée et profane* (1674). This encyclopedia comprises in an alphabetical order a list of names and places. More than the half of its content encompasses biographical entries. Also Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1697) was mainly concerned with the biographical articles.

In the field of spirituality historical research has a rich tradition,³¹ reflected in important reference works. First of all, the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*³² cover-

²⁹ See G. Fauconnier, *Mappings in thought and language*, Cambridge 1997; M. Turner, *The literary mind*, New York-Oxford 1996.

³⁰ Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 16.

³¹ See Waaijman, *Spirituality*, 406-410.

³² M. Viller, F. Cavallera, J. de Guibert et al. (Eds.), *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: Doctrine et histoire*, Paris 1932-1995 (17 vols.).

ing, as the undertitle rightly states, history and doctrine. In fact it is about Christian histories, biographies, writers, works, studies and literature, and about Christian insights and doctrines. In this respect the 25-volume reference work *World Spirituality*, in the undertitle describing itself as *An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*,³³ can be seen as a paradigm shift. The historical dimension of the project has a wide scope, situating itself within 'a comprehensive geographic and historical context'.³⁴ The first 5 volumes are dealing with the histories of the indigenous people and their spirituality (Asia, Europe, Africa, Oceania, and the three Americas). The second section of 15 volumes deals with the dominant spiritual traditions of the Far East (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism), the Middle East (Zoroastrianism, the Sumerian, Assyro-Babylonian and Hittite spiritualities) and the Mediterranean region (Egyptian, Greek and Roman spiritualities), Jewish (including biblical), Christian and Islamic spiritualities. The third section, dealing with contemporary currents reserves space for esoteric traditions which up until now have been suppressed by dominant spiritualities, and secular forms of spirituality, being primordial and lacking a proofed nomenclature. The last sections are dedicated to the interspiritual dialogue and a dictionary of world spirituality.

This broadening of horizon we also notice in specific areas of spirituality, for instance in the area of religious life. The *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*³⁵ presents in a 10-volume work the worldwide, multireligious variety of religious life and its founders, not only from a historical and sociological perspective, but also focussed on 'the internal structure of religious life' and its psychological dimension.³⁶

The historical dimension of the SPIRIN Encyclopedia is focused on the phenomenon of spirituality in its variety of historical forms, each of which unfolds itself in an outer and inner horizon.

1. In the field of spirituality we can discover a variety of figures, models and traditions encompassing forms like:
 - autobiography
 - biography/hagiography
 - primordial spirituality
 - schools of spirituality
 - counter spiritualities, etc.

³³ E. Cousins (Ed.), *World spirituality: An encyclopedic history of the religious quest*, London-NewYork 1986- (25 vols.).

³⁴ Ibid.. Vol 1, xiv.

³⁵ G. Pelliccia & G. Rocca (Eds.), *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione*, Roma 1974-2003 (10 vols.).

³⁶ G. Rocca, 'Introduzioni', in: *Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione* 1, 1974, vii, xi.

2. This phenomenon of spirituality unfolds its outer horizon, encompassing aspects like:
 - the topical and chronological framework
 - the diachronic position
 - the synchronic contextuality
3. The inner horizon of the phenomenon unfolds itself in the interiority of:
 - virtues
 - spiritual exercises
 - the mystical dimension

1.2.3 Processes

Reflecting on 'images' in the modern encyclopedic quest, we spoke about the drive behind this search: encyclopedists tried to visualize the invisible schemes, diagrams and cross-sections. They tried to catch the hidden dimension in and between things. But not only this inner world of things triggered the attention of the encyclopedists, also the interiority of human behaviour, expressing itself in manual processes of arts, crafts and mechanical trades, attracted their attention. Mostly hidden in oral traditions and in the secrecy of the practices itself, the inner dynamics of this human behaviour asked for special methods of description, understanding and interpretation. And finally, also on the level of socio-cultural reality (in the words of Chambers: the 'ecclesiastical, civil, military and commercial' reality) the encyclopedists were not only interested in 'the state of things', but they also collected information about 'the rise and progress' of this socio-cultural reality.

Although spirituality by its very nature is processual, in dictionaries this processual character mostly has been hidden behind an amount of outer world descriptions. Over against this tendency the new dictionaries emphasize the processual character of spirituality: its growth, evolution and development.

The *Dictionnaire de la Vie Spirituelle*, summing up in nine points the renewal underlying their encyclopedic project, states in point 3: 'The attention for a dynamic perspective, the perspective of a life being in a process of maturation in the time, had as result the emphasis on the evolutive aspects of spirituality'.³⁷ The *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, following the same intuition, understands 'spirituality' precisely from the processual perspective: 'What differentiates spirituality from, say, systematic theology or moral theology, is the dynamic and concrete character of the relationship of the human person to God in actual life situations. Moreover, this relationship is one of development, of growth in

³⁷ *Dictionnaire de la vie spirituelle*, viii.

the life of faith and thus covers the whole of life. Spirituality concerns religious experience as such, not just concepts or obligations'.³⁸ The *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development*³⁹ is explicitly focussed on the processual character of spirituality. On the one hand, spiritual processes are complex, caused by 'the interplay of multiple contexts, contexts that interact in dynamic ways across the life span'.⁴⁰ This interplay constitutes the complex identity of the spiritual identity: 'Owing to the innumerable contexts that influence individual development throughout the life span, religious and spiritual development must be understood as different for each person'.⁴¹ On the other hand, these processes are simple and whole: 'Spiritual development and religious development are about identity development and how, across the human life span, one sees oneself in relation to that which is considered divine or transcendent. [...] Spiritual development is about becoming a whole person, someone who stands for something that defines and gives meaning to being human'.⁴²

The processual dimension of the SPIRIN Encyclopedia is focussed on the divine-human relationship as a spiritual way and multilayered process of transformation, guided by discernment.

1. The divine-human relationship can be studied from different perspectives:
 - from the perspective of the divine reality: the divine names; creation, incarnation, revelation, redemption, etc.
 - from the perspective of the human reality: desire; soul; spirit; faculties; etc.
 - from the perspective of the relationship, which is essential for spirituality: covenant; *imago Dei*; *Minne*, etc.
2. The divine-human relationship is in most spiritualities conceived as a way or a journey: derek, tariqua, via, yana, dao, etc. Many aspects can be distinguished. The most important are:
 - the dynamic relationship between asceticism and mysticism, or *skopos* and *telos*
 - the concepts about phases and stages on the way
 - exercises and attitudes
3. The divine-human relationship can be understood as a multilayered process of transformation:
 - transformation in creation

³⁸ M. Downey (Ed.), *The new dictionary of Catholic spirituality*, Collegeville 1993.

³⁹ E. Dowling & W. Scarlett (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of religious and spiritual development*, London-New Delhi 2006.

⁴⁰ Ibid., xxiii.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² Ibidem.

- transformation in reformation
 - transformation in conformity
 - transformation in love
 - transformation in glory
4. The process of transformation is guided by the virtue of discernment (*diakrisis*), a spiritual intelligence:
- discerning between the two ways
 - discovering the authentic meaning
 - testing the truth within a community
 - giving insight in maturity and destiny

1.3 Professions, disciplines and theories

In Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance encyclopedic works were mostly a systematic arrangement of themes. Usually the order of their exposition of subjects was governed by an overarching pattern, a basic assumption which the schemes of knowledge informed. Mostly this overarching theory was firmly tied to a moral hierarchy implying that an appropriate moral state was a precondition for higher knowledge. The encyclopedia was conceived as a tree of wisdom (*arbor sapientiae*), displaying the passage to the divine wisdom (theology and philosophy) through the seven liberal arts (*artes liberales*) and the seven ages of man. Every art and science was seen as a stage through which a student should go to the contemplation (*theoria*) of wisdom. Even in the Renaissance, Reich's *Margarita Philosophica* (1503) in some editions has a front page expressing this idea of learning subjects in a sequence adjusted to stages of maturity, by a tower leading through several floors to the perfect knowledge: *theologia et metaphysica*.

Modern times have broken with this moral and spiritual hierarchy, but continued to think about the theoretical presumptions hidden in the presentations of arts and sciences, the overarching pattern behind the arrangements of words, things, and images, texts, histories and processes.

Not only the ideas behind the ordering of language and reality, texts and histories, also the basic distinctions immediately forthcoming from these insights are important and influential. Particularly important is the distinction between arts and sciences which most of the modern encyclopedias characterizes. Originally there were the *artes liberales*, including practices and theoretical knowledge. From the thirteenth century on, the works of Aristotle had a major impact, namely his distinction between theoretical and practical subjects. The old word 'arts' remained and became the name for practical knowledge, and sciences were more and more filled by the idea of theoretical knowledge of language and reality.

Thus we have a triad: disciplines as the empirically oriented and methodologically organised scientific enterprise; arts and professions as the practical knowledge; theories as the overarching pattern and the all penetrating vision.

1.3.1 Professions

As we have seen in the first paragraph the title page of Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* presents a portion of the content with the terms: 'several systems, secrets, opinions etc. among philosophers, divines, mathematicians, physicians, antiquaries, critiques etc.'. The 'systems' belong to the theoretical insights of philosophers and theologians. The 'opinions' belong to antiquaries and critics. The 'secrets' are the new technicians and scientists, representing arts and crafts. Before the Enlightenment their knowledge was hidden as a result of the self-imposed secrecy of artisan guilds. Against this background it is understandable that for instance Francis Bacon urged that manual skills and tacit knowledge of instrument-makers and tradesmen should be brought in dialogue with scientists. First of all, their materials and processes should be described. Encyclopedists tried to carry out these ideas of Bacon. They put not published knowledge of the mathematical, technical, experimental and medical practices – the 'secrets' – in their dictionaries, illuminated by images to give insight in processes and interior realities. They broke with the cultural presupposition that skills cannot be taught by words, but only gained by practice and exercise. This articulates the gap between public knowledge and knowledge implied (secretly) in practice. Encyclopedists saw it more and more as their task to describe, to understand and to explain crafts and trades as paper, soap and glass making, forging, weaving, bleaching, dying, tanning and so on – knowledge kept in secret, dark places, hidden from public communication. Against this background we can understand why Diderot urged the savant to go into workshops and learn from artisans.⁴³

In the field of spirituality the description, interpretation and understanding of spiritual practices were underdeveloped. Giving weight to doctrinal and speculative knowledge, practices and professions remained hidden and secret. Moreover, before Vatican II spirituality was characterized by a tendency toward aristocracy and specialism. The Second Vatican Council introduced by its proclamation of the 'general vocation to holiness in the Church'⁴⁴ a movement into the direction of spirituality in every day life. This brought to the fore the need for practical books in the field of spirituality, near to people in their relations, education, living and work.

A paradigm of an encyclopedia, focussing on this practical spirituality is, as the title explicitly articulates, *Praktisches Lexikon der Spiritualität*.⁴⁵ The editor

⁴³ For a description of practical knowledge and the Enlightenment encyclopedias see Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 146-155.

⁴⁴ *Constitution on the Church*, chapter 5.

⁴⁵ C. Schütz (Ed.), *Praktisches Lexikon der Spiritualität*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1988.

explains its practical character with this statement: 'The point of gravity of its interest is the praxis, the performance of the lived and to live faith'.⁴⁶ This orientation implies two aspects. Firstly, a fundamental perspective: the spiritual praxis seen from the perspective of tradition (scripture, history). Secondly, a concrete practical perspective: the spiritual praxis seen from the perspective of the contemporary culture, asking for responsibility (solidarity, justice, peace, ecology etc.) and interhuman relations (community, family, work, everyday life etc.). Spirituality as praxis grows where gospel and life, Christian and human permeate one another. So far the editor. The systematic presentation of practices and professions is only in the beginning of its development.

In the SPIRIN Encyclopedia the dimension of professions focuses on practices and fields of experience, and their respective forms of guidance, particularly spiritual accompaniment, all of them essentially being forms of mystagogy.

1. Practices belong to different fields of experience, in which they are performed, such as:
 - faith communities
 - religious life
 - secular settings: health care, education, management, etc.
2. Each of these practices have their specific forms of professional guidance and coaching:
 - ministry
 - spiritual leadership and formation
 - teacher, mentor, coach, nurse, manager, etc.
3. The most concentrated form of professional guidance – and in this sense paradigmatic – is spiritual accompaniment, in its basic structure a triangle, encompassing three positions, dialogically interrelated:
 - the person being accompanied
 - the accompanist
 - the divine guidance
4. Mystagogy, as the essence of spiritual guidance, initiates individuals (*agein*) into the awareness of God's mystery (*mysterion*), encompassing three layers of consciousness:
 - the existential openness for the divine mystery
 - the gracious self-communication of God
 - the unique calling

1.3.2 Disciplines

Since the time of Francis Bacon empirical and experimental sciences have been conceived as progressive knowledge. This implies for encyclopedias a never ending

⁴⁶ Ibid., v.

project. Answering to the problem of scientific progress the nineteenth-century encyclopedias aimed at carefully summarized knowledge, available to specialists and general readers.

In response to the explosion of sciences, particularly of the physical sciences, the scientific dictionaries sought to condense and reduce scientific knowledge to essentials in order to summarize the multidisciplinary reality and to structure a coherent account of the variety of subjects. In this way old 'arts and sciences' as grammar, logic, rhetoric, poetry, law, music, and theology were hosted in the same building with new physical and natural 'sciences' located under the faculty of Reason.

Modern encyclopedias have brought themselves in trouble by incorporating the latest scientific advances in the old corpus of sciences. They solved the problem by integrating recent summarized scientific advances into an ever changing round of sciences.

In the field of spirituality we notice the same tension. On the one hand the study of spirituality is embedded in a combination of theological disciplines: moral or dogmatic theology, exegesis or pastoral theology. In that environment it continued its own intra-disciplinary way, as can be seen in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. It gives insight in the intra-disciplinary dimension of the discipline of spirituality, from a Christian perspective.

On the other hand there is a growing openness for the inter-disciplinary dimension of the study of spirituality. In the nine-point program of the *Dictionnaire de la Vie Spirituelle* the compilers explicitly mention the interdisciplinary aspect of their project: the present situation urges 'to leave the framework of a spirituality focussed on its intern problematics. We have sought the confrontation with the proofed results of the human sciences'.⁴⁷ Therefore they invited sometimes non-theological experts to comment on traditional themes and they opened entries as: psychology and spirituality, sociology and spirituality, and so on. *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* chooses the same strategy, stating in its preface: 'The study of spirituality in the postconciliar period is an interdisciplinary enterprise. Though most of the contributors to the volume are Roman Catholic theologians, each has been invited to attend to insights from other disciplines (e.g. psychology, sociology, history, economics) as any one or several of these may contribute to a fuller understanding of the subject at hand',⁴⁸ a further development we can observe in *The New SCM Dictionary*. A new part of essays is added to the vocabulary from A to Z, representing the interdisciplinary nature of spirituality: history and spirituality, psychology and spirituality, natural sciences and spirituality, and so on.

⁴⁷ *Dictionnaire de la vie spirituelle*, ix.

⁴⁸ *The new dictionary of Catholic spirituality*, ix.

The SPIRIN Encyclopedia will deal with the different aspects of spirituality as a discipline: the intradisciplinary developments of this discipline; the interdisciplinary relationships with other disciplines, and the interrelatedness between these two fields.

1. From an intradisciplinary perspective the systematic reflections on the phenomenon of spirituality show a variety of perspectives, such as:
 - teleological perspectives: treatises on perfection
 - theologia mystica
 - theologia ascetica
 - theologia spiritualis
 - experiential approaches, etc.
2. It is specific for the discipline of spirituality to be studied by a variety of disciplines. This creates a network of interdisciplinary relations with:
 - alpha disciplines, such as theology, philosophy, history, literature
 - beta sciences, such as ecology and neurodisciplines
 - gamma disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology
 - delta disciplines, such as medicine
3. The interrelatedness of intra- and interdisciplinary developments in the study of spirituality is a field of tensions, to be studied within an epistemological framework.
 - mapping intra- and interdisciplinary links and networks
 - designing an epistemology of the discipline of spirituality

1.3.3 Theories

Every encyclopedia is driven by a theory, a more or less clear vision on the selection and organization of the subjects. It is the most powerful and most hidden 'idea' working in and through the 'approach' establishing the encyclopedia. Sometimes the 'theory' is articulated – as far as possible! An example of such a 'theory' driven encyclopedia is the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert. Their 'theory' is expressed in the triad coined by Bacon: Reason, Memory, Imagination. They radicalized this triad by giving Reason the most prominent place. In the imagery of the Enlightenment, Reason lifts the veil from Truth with the help of Philosophy. Memory and Imagination are the servants, both supported by their respective sciences and arts. Reason is the centre of all knowledge. It controls the largest number of arts and sciences and overwhelms also the two main branches of Memory and Imagination. The most important theoretical move was to replace Theology with Reason, helped by Philosophy, excluding all knowledge without an empirical base. Another important theoretical step was the removing of the inner orientation of arts and knowledge on wisdom. The secular tree of knowledge is no longer an *arbor sapientiae*.⁴⁹ This is only one example.

⁴⁹ For this theoretical drive behind the encyclopedic project of the Enlightenment see Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*.

In a comparable way every encyclopedia is permeated by a 'theory', in the twilight of conscious articulated concepts and unconscious presuppositions and interests. These last drives are always present. Even encyclopedic projects with a highly developed self-consciousness, as present in the German *Reflexionsphilosophie* of for instance Kant and Hegel, an ultimate 'enlightenment' of the deepest hidden 'theory' in and behind their encyclopedic quest could not clear up their hidden ambitions. In fact they were deeply linked with socio-cultural interests.⁵⁰

And what perhaps is more important, is the fact that the cognitive and emotional processes of knowledge are deeply rooted in the primordial processes of space and motion representation, on their turn based in the neuro-physical reality of the human body. Developments in the neurosciences throw a new light on this physical base of the human processes of representation, emotions and thinking.⁵¹ All our 'theories' are deeply rooted in our prereflective bodily presence in the world, as phenomenologists already became aware of a century ago.

The same ambiguities of explicit (articulated) and implicit (unarticulated, unconsciously working) 'theories' which drive general encyclopedias, are, of course, also present in dictionaries in the field of spirituality. Sometimes some elements of the theoretical dimension are explicitly articulated, whereas other elements remain implicit. An example of such an ambiguity is the above mentioned anthology *Light from Light*. The editors clearly situate in the first paragraph of their preface their project: 'All existing collections feature texts from more than one religion. This forces the excerpts taken from Christian mystics to be exceedingly short. In addition, such an approach all too often reflects the idea that all forms of mysticism are basically identical, a position which we reject'.⁵² The two explicit arguments, given for the choice of one religion, seem to be repeated in the next paragraph. The authors give a quantitative reason and a fundamental one. The quantitative reason is indeed a repetition: 'The editors believe that [...] to acquire an adequate idea of the particular tradition to which that mystic belongs requires exposure to texts of some length as well as a concentration on one faith'.⁵³ This is really a repetition: more faiths imply 'exceedingly short' excerpts, where 'some length' is needed. Regarding the second reason however, the fundamental one, a shift of perspective can be observed: concentration on one faith is needed (1) to avoid the idea that all forms of mysticism are basically identical – which is indeed a repetition; (2) to acquire an adequate idea of the particular tradition – which is a new argument. The question is, however: how are these two aims interrelated? Are they excluding or including one another? Is it possible to acquire a more adequate insight in Christian mysticism by reading

⁵⁰ See for this interconnectedness A. De Waelhens, *La philosophie et les expériences naturelles*, La Haye 1961.

⁵¹ Kundert, 'Gefühl und Wissen im virtuellen Raum', 109-110.

⁵² Dupré & Wiseman, *Light from light*, 1.

⁵³ Ibidem.

also Jewish and Islamic mystics? Doesn't insight in the particularity of a tradition include some general knowledge? Does the reading of texts outside the Christian tradition ipso facto include the idea that all forms of mysticism are identical? All these questions touch the unarticulated and (unconsciously?) hidden presuppositions in the 'theory' of the proposed anthology.

In the SPIRIN Encyclopedia an essential dimension will be the development of the foundational research, providing the theoretical framework by which the different paradigms in the study of spirituality can be discussed and the theoretical implications of the encyclopedic project can be reflected.

1. The hermeneutical framework, making the phenomenon of spirituality visible and understandable, encompasses:
 - systematics, reflecting on dynamics and structures, such as unity and diversity, matter and spirit
 - methodology, reflecting on basic categories (root metaphors), research strategies, methods and technics
2. This theoretical framework provides the means by which the different paradigms and approaches in the field of spirituality can be described, analyzed and discussed, such as:
 - holistic approach
 - phenomenology
 - dialogical thinking
 - hermeneutics
 - historicism
 - empirism
 - feminism
 - modernism
 - postmodernism
 - liberation/emancipation, etc.
3. This theoretical framework provides the environment in which the foundations of SPIRIN Encyclopedia are discussed, on different levels:
 - the encyclopedic project as such
 - encyclopedia as methodology
 - encyclopedia in the field of spirituality

2. CIRCLE OF LEARNING

On the front page of *The Complete Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1764-1766) Croker characterizes his work as a book 'in which the whole circle of human learning is explained'. In this sentence the writer primarily refers to the content of his project, but, alluding to the etymology of 'encyclopedia' as a 'cir-

cle of learning', he also evokes the other side of his work: the strategies by which the multifaceted content of his encyclopedia (the circle of knowledge) is arranged, systematized and oriented, in order to give access to the content and to facilitate processes of interiorization and understanding (the circle of learning).

What are the formative elements that give 'form' to such a divergent content and genre as encyclopedias are? What are the formal aspects which shape the identity of such a complicated project? How are collections of 'entries' selected and organized in such a way, that they give the readers 'entrance' to the multifaceted content? Of course there are outer elements such as binding, format and lay out. But we are looking for the inner formation of the phenomenon. Three choices seem to influence the inner form of encyclopedias: the kind of arrangement; the emphasis on old or new knowledge; the assessment of the users community. Because these choices belong to the quest of the encyclopedic project as such, the formal aspects of encyclopedias itself are a never ending process: a circle of learning.

One of the most challenging developments for the contemporary encyclopedic quest is the advent of the computer and the internet. This new technology has brought the encyclopedic project in a situation of radical transition. Not only several encyclopedias have been made available in CD-ROM format, offering multimedia enhancements (video, sound clips, animated illustrations) and frequent updates, but, what is more important, they are interactively related to the encyclopedic project. The most interesting development in this field is *Wikipedia*, a web-based, free content encyclopedia written collaboratively by volunteers, sponsored by the non-profit Wikipedia Foundation and edited in ca. 200 languages. Its purpose is to create and distribute a free international encyclopedia in as many languages as possible.

The SPIRIN Encyclopedia is designed as a digital enterprise. This entails, that all formal aspects of the encyclopedic project will be re-thought and re-defined: arrangements of the content; the retrieval of old and new collections; the organisation of the users community.

2.1 Divergent and convergent tendencies

In modern times progressive knowledge seems to be the defining feature of empirical and experimental sciences. This feature brings the scientific dictionaries in a paradoxical situation. At the one hand encyclopedias have to be general, covering all definitions, propositions and descriptions of serious sciences. At the other hand they have to be specific, registering and explaining all terms of new specializations in the field of technics and sciences. This split, caused by the very

ambition of the encyclopedic enterprise, generates other tensions. How to arrange the general and specific materials in such a way that the circle of knowledge can be a circle of learning? How to organize the accessibility of such a paradoxical phenomenon? How to prevent that a means that was meant as a map becomes a labyrinth? What is the best organization? A systematic arrangement? An alphabetical order? Or a combination of both?

Mortimer Adler, editor of the fifteenth edition of the *Britannica* recognized the problem of an encyclopedia that pretends to be more than 'a storehouse of facts'. He recurred to the encyclopedic concept that 'the whole world of knowledge is a single universe of discourse', inviting the readers to enter this universe of discourse, conceived as 'a circle of learning' instead of the 'hierarchy of the branches of knowledge', the circle being 'a figure in which one can go from any point, in either direction, around the circumference'.⁵⁴ In this concept of the circle of learning divergent and convergent tendencies of every encyclopedia are brought into a dynamic balance.⁵⁵

2.1.1 General and specific knowledge

The paradox of general and specific knowledge – formative for the encyclopedic project – is sharply reflected in the Islamic notion *ada*, a genre of general works due to some scholars applying themselves to the acquisition and diffusion of knowledge belonging to a wide range of intellectual and technical disciplines. The genre consists of 'taking a little of everything'. Indeed, the encyclopedia tries to cover 'everything' but precisely this is the very reason for a strong self limitation: only a 'little' can be taken. Nevertheless, this 'little' is a sign of 'everything' and as such a 'reference' for further searching in the circle of learning.

The tension general-specific seems to be part and parcel of the phenomenon of encyclopedia as such. But particularly in modern times this paradox worked extremely. Encyclopedias became part of scientific developments encompassing two extremes. At the one hand the increasing specialization of sciences resulting in an explosion of special encyclopedias. At the other hand the general encyclopedias which time and again tried to cover all these departments of science and art.⁵⁶

The encyclopedic tension between general and specific knowledge is also evident in the field of spirituality. There are general and specific encyclopedias. The

⁵⁴ M. Adler, 'Circle of learning', in: *Propaedia, Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1974¹⁵, vol I, 5-8.

⁵⁵ Perhaps, Kircher's concept of a 'theologia circularis' can be interesting? Th. Leinkauf, *Mundus combinatus: Studien zur Struktur der barocken Universalwissenschaft am Beispiel Athanasius Kirchers SJ (1602-1680)*, Berlin 1993.

⁵⁶ For an impression of the wide range of encyclopedias spread over all sciences in our time see A. Brewer, *Dictionaries, encyclopedias and other word-related books*, Detroit 1979 (2nd ed.).

giants of the general works are the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* and the reference work *World Spirituality*. But very useful are also the *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Spiritualità* (1979), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (1993) and others. The specific encyclopedias cover the different areas of lived spirituality, such as *Dizionario dei Spiritualità dei Laici* (1981), *A Dictionary of Devotions* (1993), *Marienlexikon* (1988-1994), *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezioni* (1973-2003), *Lexikon esoterisches Wissens* (1988), *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (1988) and so on.⁵⁷

The tension general-specific permeates of course also every dictionary as such. Confronted with the formative tension between the all-encompassing whole and the plurality of parts and aspects Philip Sheldrake states in his introduction to *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*: 'The dictionary is ecumenical and international. A serious effort has been made to do justice to a broad spectrum of Christian traditions as well as to acknowledge the global and plural nature of spirituality. The final selection and balance of entries (and of contributors) still involved some difficult choices'.⁵⁸ Even within the framework of a clear choice – 'The scope of the dictionary is deliberately limited to Christian spirituality'⁵⁹ – there are obviously the typically encyclopedic tensions between the general scope (ecumenical, international, global) and the specific aspects (traditions, global and plural nature). To cope with these tensions the concept of 'balance' reveals itself to be important, in combination with the readers community, presupposed to be in tune with this field of tension: 'In the light of the above, I am confident about two things. First, even without an imposed definition, readers will find a surprising degree of consensus about the central values and foundations of "Christian Spirituality". Secondly, readers may nevertheless be surprised by what is unexpected and challenging'.⁶⁰ Thus the general will be there, and the specific – both of them 'surprising'!

In the SPIRIN Encyclopedia the general knowledge is organized in the nine dimensions, above unfolded as a circle of knowledge. The dimension of history, for instance, gives entrance to such sections as: biography, primordial spirituality, schools of spirituality, countermovements, modern culture. Each of these sections encompasses subsections. The schools of spirituality, for instance, open up Hinduist, Buddhist, Taoist, Jewish, Christian and Islamic spirituality. And so on. In this way each dimension unfolds sections and subsections, going to the level of the most specific and concrete information.

⁵⁷ For a complete list of the general and specific encyclopedias see the SPIRIN Bibliography.

⁵⁸ P. Sheldrake, 'Introduction', in: *The new SCM Dictionary of Christian spirituality*, viii.

⁵⁹ Idem, vii.

⁶⁰ Idem, viii.

2.1.2 The systematical arrangement

To master the problem of plurality, inherent to the encyclopedic quest as such, writers order the materials in keeping with their systematic insights. In the so-called systematic encyclopedias this system is expressed in the sequence of chapters, paragraphs etc. Before modernity the content of an encyclopedia was systematically structured, or at least arranged according to some thematic fields.

In humanism the encyclopedia became more and more a presentation of various fields of sciences and the interconnections between these disciplines. Budaeus states in his introduction of his *De transitu Hellenismi ad Christianismum*: 'A work in which all disciplines are related and in communication with one another, is called an encyclopedia'. The modern encyclopedic project aims to arrange branches of knowledge into one tree of interconnections. This was a challenging task for philosophers. Taking Aristotle as a paradigm, being the first who made a summary of human knowledge build upon a philosophical basis, modern thinkers as Bacon, Descartes and Leibniz were looking for a deeper unity in the plurality of sciences.

Particularly in the German current of the idealism philosophers like Kant tried to think the unity of all sciences. Based on Kantian principles, Buhle published his *Encyclopädie* (1790) and Eschenburg his *Lehrbuch der Wissenschaftskunde* (1792). Famous is Hegel's *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundriss* (1817).

In these encyclopedias we see a reflection on the systematic as such, reflecting the attempt of German idealism to think the essence of human spirit and reality. The very title already of Schmidt's *Allgemeine Encyclopädie und Methodologie der Wissenschaften* (1810) reveals this interest. In this tradition also Schleiermacher's *Bibliographisches System der gesamten Wissenschaftskunde* (1852) can be understood. All these encyclopedias were focussed on the interconnections between the sciences and their intrinsic unity, based on the human spirit. In Germany this quest became a philosophical-epistemological program, named *Enzyklopädie*, reflecting on the unity of all sciences.⁶¹

A classic paradigm of a systematic arrangement of spirituality is *De Triplici Via* (1260) of Bonaventure,⁶² that has been called the *summa* of mystical theology.⁶³

⁶¹ For a deeper insight in this program see U. Dierse, *Enzyklopädie: Zur Geschichte eines philosophischen und wissenschaftstheoretischen Begriffs*, Bonn 1977. For a theological encyclopedic design see F. Mildenerberger, *Theorie der Theologie: Enzyklopädie als Methodenlehre*, Stuttgart 1972, particularly p. 12.

⁶² Bonaventure, *The works of Bonaventure*. Vol. I: *Mystical Opuscula, The triple way or love enkindled* (trans. J. de Vinck), Paterson (NJ), 1960.

⁶³ Bonaventure, *'De triplici via' in altschwäbischen Übertragung* (Ed. K. Ruh), Berlin 1957, 7.

The book offers a synthesis of all spiritual themes in a thoroughly systematic way: 'The material is present in a logical arrangement, a systematic form. Everything that possibly belongs to the object must be incorporated and treated in its proper place so that the function and inner coherence of the separate elements become clear and the perspective on the "whole" remains open'.⁶⁴ The spiritual *summa* of Bonaventure is structured in triads, following the unfolding of God's Trinity: 'Since every science, and particularly the science contained in Holy Scripture is concerned with the Trinity before else, every science as such must perform present some trace of this same Trinity'.⁶⁵

A contemporary paradigm of a systematic reference work, although alphabetically arranged is the *Dictionnaire de la Vie Spirituelle*. The 105 thematic articles of this content- and theme-oriented encyclopedia, systematically arranged in subthemes by the analytic index,⁶⁶ treat spiritual life in its different aspects. There is no place for names, biographical information, treatment of currents and figures. The absence of history, biography and geography in the lemmata makes the primary scope of this encyclopedia evident: inform the reader in a systematic way and in comprehensible terms about spiritual life.

We should keep in mind, that the ordering of subjects was not only an intellectual, but also a mystagogical sequence. Even 'secular' encyclopedias aimed to initiate the reader in a process of wisdom.⁶⁷ As a tree of wisdom the encyclopedia displays the passage to wisdom through the seven liberal arts and the seven ages of man. In the same way the *De Triplici Via* initiates the reader through a sequence of triads in the all encompassing Trinity. The system of encyclopedias, until the Renaissance and even later, are to be understood as an order of learning.

A contemporary paradigm of such a systematic-mystagogical encyclopedia in the field of spirituality is the *Encyclopedie van de Mystiek* (Encyclopedia of Mysticism).⁶⁸ In Part I different aspects of mysticism are treated, mostly in an interdisciplinary way: mysticism; arts; philosophy; philology; sciences; education etc. In this way the phenomenon of mysticism comes in the picture. In part II the different forms and traditions of mysticism are described. Part III (ca. 100 pages out of the ca. 1100 pages) covers in an alphabetical order persons and themes in the field of mysticism. This systematic encyclopedia unfolds of course the

⁶⁴ M. Schlosser (Ed.), 'Einleitung', in: Bonaventure, *De triplici via*, Freiburg 1993, 13.

⁶⁵ *De triplici via*, prologue. Cf. *The works of Bonaventure* I, 63.

⁶⁶ See the extensive 'Index analytique', *Ibid.*, 1215-1244.

⁶⁷ See F. Saxl, 'A spiritual encyclopaedia of the later Middle Ages', in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1965), 82-142.

⁶⁸ J. Boers et al. (Eds.), *Encyclopedie van de mystiek: Fundamenten, tradities, perspectieven*, Kampen-Tielt 2003.

phenomenon of mysticism in its basic structure and main forms, but at the same time it aims at a learning process: answering 'the most essential questions: What exactly is mysticism? What is its value, also for the future of human mankind and its world?'⁶⁹

In a digital encyclopedia like the SPIRIN Encyclopedia the system can be a dynamic and inductive one. There is not a pre-established order to be imposed on specific dimensions and sections. A system of links relations can be established between subjects, sections and dimensions, as in digital bibliographical systems: by keywords found in every entry itself. By a system of digital procedures these keywords can be retrieved. At the same time the nine main dimensions can be combined by means of a digital number given to every entry.

2.1.3 The alphabetical arrangement

Plurality and unity both belong to the paradoxical enterprise of the encyclopedic project. The pole of unity seems to be respected adequately by a systematic approach, although the 'system' many times consisted in a collection of themes. The alphabetic order seems to cope adequately the pole of plurality and variety. It is, therefore, not surprising, that from old times on the alphabet was a principle of organizing materials. Already in the sixth century BC the alphabetical organization of linguistic materials was a wide spread phenomenon.⁷⁰ The use of the alphabetical order was restricted to word lists and single sciences.

The most obvious feature of the modern scientific dictionaries is that they used the alphabetical order for the whole of arts and sciences. This implied a radical break with the traditional assumptions concerning proper relations between subjects. Some scholars exaggerate this shift from systematic to alphabetical organization as a sign of emancipation, as the zero degree of taxonomy, avoiding the hierarchy of a system. Actually, the reasons to use the alphabetical arrangement were more practical: flexibility, indefinite capacity, ability to absorb new findings.⁷¹ Alphabetical organization and systematical arrangement were not seen as incompatible. For instance, in Alsted's *Encyclopaedia* various kinds of alphabetical indexes were embedded in a systematic structure.

⁶⁹ A. Jelsma, 'Inleiding', in: *Encyclopedie van de mystiek*, 17.

⁷⁰ See: W. Watson, 'Anaphoric alliteration in Ugaritic verse', in: idem, *Traditional techniques in classical Hebrew verse*, Sheffield 1994, 431-434; W. Soll, 'Babylonian and Biblical acrostics', in: *Biblica* 69 (1988), 305-323; idem, *Psalm 119: Matrix, form and setting*, Washington 1991; K. Seybold, 'Akrostichie im Psalter', in: *Theologische Zeitschrift* 57 (2001), 172-183.

⁷¹ See Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 25-27.

The most practical reason for using the alphabetical order was probably the advantage of accessibility to a wider group of readers. Diderot argues that systematically ordered 'the form of this work would have been even less convenient for the majority of our readers'.⁷² Here we see again how the circle of knowledge at the same time is a circle of learning: to be accessible for a wide range of readers, entering in their own way the circle of knowledge.

Encyclopedic works in the field of spirituality are mostly alphabetically arranged. The most famous is of course the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. The first volume in 1937 starts immediately, without any introduction, with Aa: secret congregations dedicated to a perfect morality and religiosity. The last volume in 1995 covers the 'Tables Générales', with an introduction of one page, explaining the aim of the general index: the most important passages of the *Dictionnaire* regarding themes and persons are collected and linked with an alphabetical list of subjects. In this way the different forms of information regarding a subject are brought together in an alphabetical system and can be retrieved. One can say that this monument of encyclopedic knowledge consequently is organized according to an alphabetical order. The system is completely hidden behind the alphabet. One has to guess the inner connections and the deeper unity of the work. Obviously the system behind the alphabetical order is 'History', 'Spiritual doctrine' and 'Christian'. But using this dictionary regularly, one can notice that much more threads are woven in this splendid garment.

Mostly encyclopedias are more or less a mixed form of alphabet and system. The *Dictionnaire de la Vie Spirituelle* consists of 105 larger thematic articles, arranged in an alphabetical order, but systematically opened up in subthemes by the analytic index.⁷³ We have seen in the previous paragraph how the *Encyclopedie van de Mystiek* treats in 1000 pages important mystical themes, arranged in a systematical way, the last 100 pages being preserved for an alphabetical list of subjects. Interesting is the shift between the old and the new *SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. The old *SCM Dictionary* is completely alphabetically ordered, starting, after a short preface, immediately with 'Abandon'.⁷⁴ The *New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* opens with 13 essays (79 pages). The aim is: 'To provide a survey of the content, methods and currant debates within a still relatively young academic field – topics that merited a longer treatment than was possible in standard A-Z entries. This section clearly illustrates the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary spirituality'.⁷⁵

⁷² Cited in C. Koepp, 'The alphabetical order: Work in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*', in: S. Kaplan & C. Koepp (Eds.), *Work in France: Representations, meaning, organizations and practice*, Ithaca (NY) 1986, 237.

⁷³ See the extensive 'Index analytique', 1215-1244.

⁷⁴ G. Wakefield (Ed.), *A dictionary of Christian spirituality*, London 1983.

⁷⁵ Sheldrake, 'Introduction', in: *The new SCM dictionary of Christian spirituality*, viii.

One of the main reasons for using an alphabetical order was a practical one: the accessibility of the circle of knowledge. For a digital encyclopedia, which the SPIRIN Encyclopedia is, an alphabetical arrangement of the information is not needed. Via digital search procedures the visitor of the encyclopedia can retrieve every subject he or she is looking for.

2.2 *Old, new and renewed*

Not only the tension between plurality and unity, mastered by an alphabetical and/or systematic arrangement, also the polarity old-new is an important formative power. This polarity can be seen on the frontispiece engraving in Chambers' *Cyclopaedia*. In the foreground we see people doing practical things (measuring, calculating, sketching, observing, experimenting, discussing). At the background (back left-hand corner) we see the section 'Theologia': an old library without people.⁷⁶ In this frontispiece clearly the polarity between old and new knowledge is expressed. The old knowledge is symbolized in books: in Rafael's 'School of Athens' books are in the foreground, books in the hands of philosophers and theologians. The new knowledge is a circle of people reading in the book of Nature.

Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* is only one example in which the polarity between old and new knowledge is expressed. Every encyclopedia is intrinsically formed by this field of tension. Sometimes an encyclopedia understands itself as a treasure in which all the knowledge is collected. Sometimes the drive of the editors is precisely the opposite: to present new contemporary knowledge, of course against the background of old sciences. Sometimes old knowledge is brought at the attention of interested readers with a new flavor.

2.2.1 Collective memory

It seems as if each generation tries to summarize periodically the elements of the common patrimony that have been accumulated. Particularly in times of transition we see this tendency of accumulating all the richnesses of the past in one reference work. Cassiodorus wrote his *Institutiones* at the very moment of the confrontation between the Longobards and the Romans (ca. 550). In the transition into the Middle Ages the *Etymologiae* of Isidorus of Sevilla (ca. 600) appears. This tendency of conserving and cultivating the best of knowledge has been continued in the Middle Ages. They had not the ambition to cover all knowledge, nor did they offer an exhaustive treatment of subject. They provided

⁷⁶ For a description of this frontispiece see Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 120-121.

summaries of the most significant branches of knowledge, based on principles of theology and philosophy. Encyclopedic works in these periods are conservative: they provide the key (*clavis*) to a garden (*hortus*) and a precious treasure (*thesaurus*).

Encyclopedic projects are a training in collective memory. They preserve the collective knowledge of a community, in case all other books were lost: a library of libraries. Not without reason Ramon Lull and his successors related the encyclopedia with the development of the faculty of memory. Reflecting on the human faculty of memory the encyclopedic ideals of the seventeenth century culminated in *Systema Mnemonicon* (ca. 1610) of Henry Alsted.⁷⁷

Encyclopedic activities are stimulated when collective knowledge is threatened by destruction or silent disappearance. In the seventeenth century mysticism became marginalized. It disappeared in a separate world and was not felt to be in accord with the sentiments of ordinary people.⁷⁸ Only mystics understood the secret language which gives access to the world of mysticism. Within this context we see the rise of a type of vocabularies in which the terminology of the mystics was explained.⁷⁹ The most famous of these encyclopedias is Sandaeus' *Pro Theologica Mystica Clavis* (1640). In his 'key' (*clavis*) to the treasure of mystical language Sandaeus not only aims at clarification of the terms, but also at the defense of mystical theology, as he explicitly states in the dedication of his work: 'ad aliquem lucem et defensionem mysticae', that is: 'to clarify and to defend mysticism'.⁸⁰ In a preamble Sandaeus sums up the problems of mystical theology: mystics develop their own style and language (new words, hyperbolic and symbolic expressions, evocative words). Because they speak about the Inexpressible, they use paradoxical and often negative articulations, different from scholastic rationality.⁸¹ These obscurities in the mystical language urge Sandaeus to clarify their meaning and to illustrate that mystical language is rooted in a rich heritage of 119 mystical sources, no one of them being in suspicion, only classics as Basil, Ambrose, Cassian, Bernard and so forth.

Not only times of transition can be the 'formative' influence for shaping or reshaping an encyclopedia. Also times of harvesting after years of research can produce the synthesis of an old framework, integrating some new elements. The *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Spiritualità*⁸² offers a collection of themes and trea-

⁷⁷ For this aspect of (collective) memory see F. Yates, *The art of memory*, London 1960.

⁷⁸ Cf. M. de Certeau, *The mystic fable. Vol 1: The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (trans. M.B. Smith), Chicago-London 1992, 97-101 (orig. publ. 1982).

⁷⁹ P. Adnès, 'Mystique, II, B, XVIe-XXe siècles', in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 10 (1980), 1929.

⁸⁰ M. Sandaeus, *Pro theologia mystica clavis* (1640), reprint Heverlee-Leuven 1963, 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 6-10.

⁸² E. Ancilli (Ed.), *Dizionario enciclopedico di spiritualità*, Rome 1975; a later three volumes edition appeared Rome 1992.

tises, following a classical (doctrinal and historical) scheme. It is conceived as a spiritual theology, embedded within the discipline of theology and with a strongly ecclesiastical perspective. Spiritual theology, a late nineteenth century concept, provides the framework integrating developments of Vatican II, such as sensitivity for psychology, contextuality and pastoral practices.

Modern digital technologies have enormously widened the accesses to the sources of spirituality. Many works are now available online or on CD-ROM. An interesting example is the series *Corpus Christianorum*, a classic treasure for the study of spirituality. This series is available on CD-ROM, search actions included, and online. In general, the SPIRIN Encyclopedia will provide texts online, texts via direct links, or will give information regarding CD-ROMs.

2.2.2 New insights

Encyclopedias are to preserve the past by summarizing the most valuable knowledge. In this sense the role of, for instance, medieval works was one of storing and preserving traditional and received knowledge. At the same time, however, encyclopedias were used as an instrument in which new knowledge could be integrated. A good paradigm are the High Middle Ages of the twelfth and thirteenth century. New sciences appeared in the new universities: the philosophy of Aristotle, the astronomy of Ptolemaeus, the Euclidian arithmetic, the medicines of Galenus and Hippocrates, and so forth. New encyclopedias tried to integrate this new knowledge in a new synthesis.

Particularly after 1500 we see the rise of encyclopedias summarizing new scientific insights. New disciplines received their place in the cycle of sciences: history of antiquity, biographical materials, geography and descriptions of old practices and new techniques. Bacon opened the floodgates, calling for the collection of new facts and observations, a constant revision of current disciplines. But the height was the rhetoric of the Enlightenment, stressing the need to record new knowledge, removing errors and obscurantism.

The encyclopedias of the eighteenth century, unlike their medieval predecessors, could no longer look back, seeking to conserve and transmit the best knowledge to the next generation. Rather they had to offer a summary of progressive knowledge, to integrate the most recent scientific advances, both empirical and theoretical, into a rounded coverage of the arts and sciences.⁸³

The rhetoric of 'new' insights is apparently present in the encyclopedic effort made in the field of spirituality after Vatican II. The very titles of the encyclopedic works reveal this rhetoric: *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità* (1979), *The*

⁸³ Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 77.

New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality (1993), *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2005), and others. They all try to articulate the newness of their encyclopedic enterprise. The presentation of the *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità* reveals immediately its intention: 'Our time feels an urgent need to bring spirituality and daily life together'.⁸⁴ The aim and purpose of *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* is 'to take stock of the remarkable developments in Church and world since the council, but with a specific focus on the reform and renewal of Catholic spirituality that the council set in motion'.⁸⁵ The *New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* articulates its newness differently. The editor refers to the radical changes in the last decades in the field of spirituality:

The most significant development in the intervening years [the twenty years since the old *SCM Dictionary*] has been the growth of spirituality as a major academic discipline with its own methodology. This factor radically reshapes how a dictionary needs to be constructed and so the decision was taken to create a completely new dictionary rather than to update the old one.⁸⁶

In this introduction is explicitly articulated that the factor 'newness' is a factor which 'radically reshapes' the construction of a dictionary.

The SPIRIN Encyclopedia will continue the renewal, started with Vatican II. The dimensions of theories, disciplines, and professions try to integrate theoretical and practical aspects, mediated by epistemological discussions. Particularly important is the wide range of disciplines dealing with the phenomenon of spirituality, not only theology and the sciences of religions or history and philosophy, but also medicine, management sciences, pedagogy etc. This asks for epistemological reflections and discussions. The SPIRIN Encyclopedia will facilitate these developments.

2.2.3 Renewal of the past

Old and new are relative concepts. Sometimes people discover old things, which they experience as new. These are times of renaissance, renewal or restoration. Also in the area of encyclopedic activities writers can be inspired by old traditions experienced as new.

An interesting example is the commonplace (*locus communis*) in the classical period, referring to a general argument capable of being used in different situations. A good orator, as Quintilian says in his *Institutiones Oratoriae*, should have

⁸⁴ S. De Fiores & T. Goffi (Eds.), *Nuovo dizionario di spiritualità*, Roma 1979, vii.

⁸⁵ M. Downey, 'Editor's preface', in: *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, vii.

⁸⁶ Sheldrake, 'Introduction', in: *The new SCM dictionary of Christian spirituality*, vii.

the ability to produce copious illustrations from particular ideas.⁸⁷ Renaissance and Humanist writers copied this practice to build up a *copia verborum* as part of rhetoric. In this way they produced a body of material which could easily be retained and repeated.⁸⁸ In line of the classical tradition the Humanist writer Erasmus 'offered advice on how to collect words and passages under various *topoi* or *loci* (places) as a means of storing extracts from books that could later be brought together and embellished in either writing or conversation'.⁸⁹ The themes collected under one 'head' were called 'commonplaces'. Commonplace books were storehouses (*thesauri*) of useful topics and phrases, driven by the Renaissance passion for accumulating classical knowledge. 'The commonplace book with its encyclopedic array of topics or places was thought of as a compendium of knowledge displayed in a systematic pattern of some kind and producing a "circle" of learning or a unity of the arts and sciences'.⁹⁰ In this Renaissance practice of commonplace books we see a renewal of collecting knowledge. Reading through classical authors Renaissance writers collected useful materials and placed them in a systematic way within an encyclopedic framework. Here we see an encyclopedic enterprise in function of a restoration of old knowledge.

In the field of spirituality one may point to *The New Dictionary of Spiritual Thought*.⁹¹ This encyclopedia promises insight in 'more than 3,000 Western and Eastern esoteric and spiritual concepts'⁹² and hopes to be a 'invaluable armchair companion for a lifelong spiritual quest'.⁹³ This sounds new, as the title suggests, but the content is old, the encyclopedia being an indispensable key to 'the timeless wisdom teachings'.⁹⁴ The newness of this area of spirituality seems primarily to be the (re)discovery of traditions within the western spirituality that are (mis)understood from a dominant Christian perspective.

An example of a higher scientific standard is the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*.⁹⁵ It not only 'brings together a great range of historical currents and personalities that have flourished in western culture and society over a period of roughly two millennia, from late Antiquity to the present', but it questions also 'certain ingrained assumptions about the history of Western religion and culture', and promotes 'new agendas and analytical frameworks for

⁸⁷ See Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 104.

⁸⁸ R. Bolgar, *The classical heritage and its beneficiaries*, Cambridge 1954, 274.

⁸⁹ Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 104.

⁹⁰ J. Lechner, *Renaissance concepts of the commonplaces*, Westport (CN) 1962, 151.

⁹¹ C.E. Parrish-Harra (Ed.), *The new dictionary of spiritual thought*, Tahlequah (Oklahoma) 2002 (2nd ed.).

⁹² See the book review on www.forewordmagazine.net/articles/shw_article.aspx?articleid=40.

⁹³ In the book description on <http://www.sanctasophia.org/shp/index.html>.

⁹⁴ Ibidem.

⁹⁵ Ed. J. Hanegraaff et al., Leiden-Boston 2005.

research in these domains'.⁹⁶ Here we can see how a materially and methodologically repressed area of spirituality can be (re)presented in the discipline of spirituality.

Developments in electronic technology make it possible, that a (re)discovered content and a (re)framed approach can have more 'formative' influence on an encyclopedic project in the field of spirituality. Digital technology is not linearly organized but as an open, virtual space. Forms of spirituality, until now considered to be secondary, can be presented in their own right: forms of indigenous spirituality in an area dominated by schools of spirituality; forms of lay spirituality in a secularized society; forms of counter spirituality in a culture dominated by the northern hemisphere; and so on. The SPIRIN Encyclopedia will open its virtual space for the rich variety of spiritual forms and models.

2.3 *Pragmatics*

An encyclopedia is not just a collection of subjects: words, things, images, texts, histories etc., covering a circle of knowledge. This content has to be brought in a 'format'. In the making of this format some 'formative' influences are important. First, the tension between unity and plurality, expressing itself in an alphabetical and/or systematic order. By doing this, the circle of knowledge becomes a circle of learning: the reader, going through the circle of knowledge, discovers, in a spirally process, unity in diversity and plurality in unity. Going from entry to entry he enters a circle of learning. Second, the tension between old and new, past and present, memory and actuality, all relative categories. What we at this moment experience as 'old' can very soon be discovered as 'new'. And in reverse, what now seems to be 'up-to-date' can within a few years been felt as 'outdated'. Going into an encyclopedia, wherein old and new are brought together, the reader is initiated in a circle of learning. These two 'formative' influences (divergent-convergent, old-new), transforming a circle of knowledge into a circle of learning, introduce us in the pragmatics of encyclopedias: the world of the users.⁹⁷ From the pragmatic perspective the encyclopedia can be described as an essentially didactic discourse. It is not purely the unfolding of a scientific content or a literary creation, it communicates information which has already been formulated and to some extent socially accepted, using the language game of science.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ J. Hanegraaf, 'Introduction', in: idem, vii.

⁹⁷ See Rey, *Encyclopédies et dictionnaires*, 42-43.

⁹⁸ Idem, 9-12.

Looking back into history and looking around at the overwhelming amount of encyclopedias one may say that the pragmatics of the encyclopedic quest moves within a triangle of users: students, scholars and lay people. But we should be aware, that entering the encyclopedia as a circle of learning, almost every reader will become subsequently student, scholar and lay, for this simple reason: not all entries give the readers the same role. Some entries place them in the role of student, because they are studying in this area. Some entries give them the role of scholar, because of their expertise. Some entries place them in the role of lay, because the information is completely new for them. What remains is a circle of learning, moving the reader, again and again, in a new role: student, scholar and lay person.

In the metaphorical language of the dance one can say: entering in the encyclopedia as a circle of knowledge, the reader loses his or her selfconstructed center and shares 'without selfconcern the dance of wisdom', which unfolds its sparks of insights within the dynamic of its open space.⁹⁹

This is also true for the field of spirituality. Philip Sheldrake in the introduction of *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* states rightly:

At a time when the theme of 'spirituality' is of widespread interest, this new dictionary will be a vital reference work for everyone who wishes to deepen their general understanding of spirituality and knowledge, specifically of the Christian spiritual tradition in all its forms. More particularly, the dictionary is intended to offer a fundamental study tool for students and academic teachers across the English-speaking world.¹⁰⁰

Here the three reader groups are present: the interested 'everyone', the 'student' and the 'academic teachers', the triangle of pragmatics (of course not without the interests of writers, editors and publishing houses).¹⁰¹

2.3.1 Students

The term 'encyclopedia' is linked with the fifth century BC in Greece. As the etymology shows, originally the encyclopedia was not a written discourse but a circle of studies, a circle of learning (*egkuklios paideia*). Every freeborn Greek should first enter this round of education before he learned a specific skill or got a function in public life.

⁹⁹ W. Schneider, 'Sorgefrei und im Tanz der Weisheit: Philosophie und Theologie im Kuppelrund der Hagia Sophia Justinians', in: *Castrum Peregrini: Zeitschrift für Literatur-, Kunst- und Geistesgeschichte* 55 (2006) no. 231/232, 52-90.

¹⁰⁰ Sheldrake, 'Introduction', in: *The new SCM dictionary of Christian spirituality*, vii.

¹⁰¹ See for these aspects in modern times Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions*, 195-276.

This educational pragmatics has not been lost with the end of Antiquity. Until the Middle Ages compendia were used for educational purposes. Prototype of such a genre was the *Didaskalion* of Hugo of St. Victor. This work can be seen as an encyclopedic initiation in the scientific world.¹⁰²

In modern times a pedagogue as Comenius saw, from his educational perspective, the encyclopedia as a single book in which, in condensed form, the most useful knowledge physically was contained. The educational ideals dictated that the unity of knowledge, once mastered by scholars, must be shared with students. People, lost in a sea of books, need a simple entrance. His *A Pattern of Universal Knowledge* (1651) was meant as a book giving access to all books available: 'We determine therefore, that a Book should be compiled, for containing all things which are necessary to be knowne and done, believed and hoped for by man, in respect of this and the life to come'.¹⁰³

The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality is, as far as we know, the only reference work which mentions explicitly the position of the student: 'The dictionary is intended to offer a fundamental study tool for students'.¹⁰⁴ This users group is indeed helped by this encyclopedia, for several reasons. First, the separate section of short essays on the front of the dictionary introduces the students into the study of spirituality, providing a survey of the content, the methods, the current debates and the interdisciplinary character of the contemporary study of spirituality. Second, the dictionary covers a wide range of themes, not only the classic ones (asceticism, devotions, conversion, conformity etc), but also recent topics (food, clothing, architecture, business, sports etc.). Third, although the dictionary clearly limited itself to Christian spirituality, entries are provided for other schools of spirituality (Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism etc.).

The SPIRIN Encyclopedia is strongly connected with the perspective of learning. The thesis of this article is: encyclopedia is a circle of knowledge innerly directed by circles of learning. Students are at the centre of learning. Therefore SPIRIN Encyclopedia will be connected with SPIRIN Education. There will be made a copy of the real SPIRIN Encyclopedia for students. In this simulation programme they can make their Masters in spirituality, starting from a self developed research proposal and tutored by experts in the field of spirituality. The learning processes of the student will have a formative influence on the developments of the SPIRIN Encyclopedia.

¹⁰² Illich, *Du lisible au visible*.

¹⁰³ J. Comenius, *A pattern of universal knowledge*, London 1651, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Shel Drake, 'Introduction', in: *The new SCM dictionary of Christian spirituality*, vii.

2.3.2 Scholars

In Antiquity and Middle Ages an encyclopedic work was a scientific work.¹⁰⁵ Based on a philosophical tradition, Varro made ca. 50 BC his encyclopedic work in the strictest sense of the word: the 45 books of the *Antiquitas*, the 9 books of the *Disciplinae* covering the nine arts (later reduced to seven arts), the 3 books of the *Rusticae*, and the 15 books of the *Hebdomades*, a biographical dictionary, covering seven hundred Greek and Roman personalities. In this book, although the educational scope is everywhere present, a scientific attitude of systematization, linked with a constant semantic interest is at work.

With Augustine we see a shift of paradigm. In his *De Doctrina Christiana* we notice a systematization within the framework of the Holy Scripture, integrating the Greek philosophers, particularly the Stoicins. All words, all things, all creatures mentioned by Scripture are ordered in a system of categories.¹⁰⁶ One of the Christian encyclopedic drives from that time on is to discover and to conceptualize the deeper structures and categories of the Bible. This is, for instance, the framework of the famous encyclopedias of Isidore of Sevilla and others.

In modern times encyclopedias became the vehicle for communication between scholars. They tried to develop a new framework for the new arts and sciences, no longer accepting the Bible and its theological explanations as the basic structure of their encyclopedic project. These circles of scholars were not closed areas. Actually they were the scientific center of the strongly growing group of lay people: the citizens. The scholars created a circle of learning for the emancipated bourgeoisie in Europe.

In present time the encyclopedia seems to be no longer part of scientific work. On the other hand, as trustful and well ordered account of scientific work, an encyclopedia can only be made by the contribution of many specialists in a particular area of science.

This surely is true for the two great encyclopedic projects in the area of spirituality: the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* and the reference work *World Spirituality*. The first one, strictly alphabetically arranged, is made by 1700 contributors during a period of sixty years. The second one, 'an encyclopedic history of the religious quest', is thematically ordered, covering the main traditions in the field of spirituality. The scope of this reference work is clearly inter-religious, whereas the *Dictionnaire* remains within the triangle Christian-historical-doctrinal. The *World Spirituality* is aiming at 'a new discipline in the field of religion, the discipline of spirituality'.¹⁰⁷ Both encyclopedias are made by excellent scholars and

¹⁰⁵ Rey, *Encyclopédies et dictionnaires*, 53-69.

¹⁰⁶ See for instance *De doctrina Christiana*, book II.

¹⁰⁷ E. Cousins, 'Preface', in: *Christian spirituality: Origins to the twelfth century*, London 1986 (World Spirituality 16), xiii.

have a users group in mind mainly composed by students and scholars, without excluding however interested lay people.

The SPIRIN Encyclopedia can be seen as a digital branche at the tree of the encyclopedic project in the field of spirituality. It is a new workplace for scholars, where they can design, develop, write and discuss their entries. Each entry is automatically linked with a discussion forum. They can invite colleagues to give feedback, if they like. Procedures will be developed guaranteeing the quality of the articles and the intellectual property of the writers.

2.3.3 Interested lay people

One of the 'formative' elements of encyclopedias is its threefold pragmatic ambition: providing experts their forum, offering critically tested knowledge for students, and giving access to the scientific world for a broader group of interested lay people.¹⁰⁸ Particularly in the modern world this third ambition is important. This can be demonstrated by the famous, theory driven encyclopedic project of the *Encyclopédie* edited by Diderot and d'Alembert. The format of this encyclopedia can not be understood without the assumptions about the public character of information and the claim on a free intellectual exchange of ideas. The project breaks with the Ancient Régime, dominated by tradition and theology. We have seen, that the *Encyclopédie* not only offers a systematically arranged whole of traditional knowledge, but it gives also descriptions of arts, crafts, and trades, till then invisible, hidden as they were in oral traditions and in the simpleness of the practices of the tiers état, the lay people. The encyclopedists articulated and visualized these practices (and rationalized them), in order to bring them in public communication, at the service of the tiers état and the bourgeoisie.

Lay people as the addressees of the encyclopedic project is obvious in the time of the Enlightenment. For instance, the *Frauenzimmer Lexicon* (1796) by G. Röbel is evidently didactic: it supports higher class woman in their intellectual *Bildung*. This kind of encyclopedia transformed itself into the genre of the so called *Konversations Lexica* (Hübner, Marberger etc.), offering, as Hübner explains the name of his lexicon, items of refined learning needed in daily intercourse with educated people.

In the field of spirituality several dictionaries are practice oriented, sometimes clearly expressed in the title of the work. The *Praktisches Lexikon der Spiritualität* is such an encyclopedia. The editor Christian Schütz expresses its pragmatic purpose explicitly: 'The addressee of the lexicon is the interested and religiously

¹⁰⁸ See C. Marelllo, *Lessico ed educazione popolare*, Roma 1980.

approachable Christian, not facing faith and religious praxis in a distant way, but involving him or herself with a positive openness and experiences. This book offers a support for reflection on everyday life experiences'.¹⁰⁹ Therefore the lexicon does not cover specific questions of spiritual theology or other methodological and historical problems.

This, however, does not mean 'that the lexicon should renounce a solid theological basis and information. These are everywhere at the background'.¹¹⁰ Here we see clearly the pragmatic tension between two 'formative' groups: the group of 'practicians', the lay people (at the foreground) and the 'theoreticians', the scholars (at the background). This formative tension is not only typical for general encyclopedias, but obviously also for an encyclopedia in a specific field of knowledge like spirituality. Interesting is also the explicit way in which the editor articulates the pragmatic of his work. The non academic reader should be approachable, should involve him or herself with openness and experience. Here the editor outlines the profile and attitudes of the expected reader.

The SPIRIN Encyclopedia will be accessible for the interested reader. But its main scope is the webcommunity SPIRIN: researchers, lecturers, professionals, and students in the field of spirituality. They exchange their research results and discuss their insights. SPIRIN Encyclopedia is their workplace and their circle of learning.

SUMMARY

This article analyzes the encyclopedic quest in the area of spirituality, against the background of the phenomenon of encyclopedia in general, thus providing a theoretical framework for the SPIRIN Encyclopedia. It will be shown, that the circle of spiritual knowledge (words, things, images, texts, histories, processes, professions, disciplines, theories) functions as a circle of learning for researchers, lecturers, students and professionals in the field of spirituality.

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¹⁰⁹ C. Schütz, 'Vorwort', in: *Praktisches Lexikon der Spiritualität*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1988, vii.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem.